

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1096

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Community & Economic Development & Trade

**Title:** An act relating to creating postsecondary opportunity programs.

**Brief Description:** Creating postsecondary opportunity programs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kenney, Priest, Quall, Wallace, Conway, Haler, Morris, Ormsby, Linville, Jarrett, Dickerson, Hunt, Walsh, P. Sullivan, Darneille, Appleton, Morrell, Williams, Dunn, Schual-Berke, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Chase, Upthegrove, McCoy, Green, O'Brien, Hudgins, Sells, Springer, Moeller, Goodman, Barlow, Eddy, Santos, Simpson, Haigh, Lantz, Kagi and Rolfes.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Community & Economic Development & Trade: 1/18/07, 1/22/07 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to develop and implement the Opportunity Grant Program.
- Instructs the SBCTC, business, labor, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to identify high demand training programs and designate them as "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study."
- Directs community and technical colleges and local workforce development councils to develop the Opportunity Partnership Program.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TRADE

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Pettigrew, Vice Chair; Bailey, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Darneille, Haler, Rolfes and P. Sullivan.

**Staff:** Jennifer Thornton (786-7111).

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

## **Background:**

### **Employer Needs**

Regular surveys of employers conducted by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB), show that employers in the state consistently report difficulty finding workers for jobs with mid-level skills that require some postsecondary education, but less than a bachelor's degree. The WTECB projects job openings for new workers with mid-level skills in Washington at 31,000 annually between 2009 and 2012. The WTECB estimates that to meet this demand, an additional 1,170 full-time equivalent (FTE) workforce education students are needed annually, in addition to increases tied to student-age population growth.

### **Unmet Financial Needs of Students**

In 2006-2007, the average cost of community and technical college attendance is \$12,900 per year, when tuition and fees, books, living expenses and transportation are included. Seven different state agencies currently administer 18 state and federally-funded workforce programs in Washington. Low-income students can apply for existing state and federal need-based aid. However, not all low-income students are eligible for need-based aid and there is no guarantee that a student will receive aid to cover all of his/her costs.

A 2006 budget proviso required the WTECB to conduct a study on financial aid and access issues for workforce education students. The study found that during 2004-05, after accessing traditional student aid and aid from workforce development programs, the remaining unmet need for students was \$97 million per year. The study found financial need to be the biggest barrier to increased student access and retention in workforce programs.

### **Opportunity Grants Pilot Program**

The 2006 operating budget provided \$4 million for the community and technical college system to develop and implement the Opportunity Grants Pilot Program, which was designed to test strategies for increasing access to postsecondary education for low income students in job-specific programs. As of December 2006, 436 students were participating in the 10 colleges selected from across the state to participate in the pilot. A preliminary report by SBCTC stated that:

- 68 percent of Opportunity Grant participants are parents;
- the average household income for Opportunity Grant participants is less than \$11,000 per year, with an average household size of three;
- 97 percent of students who began in one of the pilot programs remain engaged and on their chosen career pathway;
- Opportunity Grant students are enrolled at all educational levels, from adult basic skills to college-level coursework;
- 51 percent of Opportunity Grant participants are enrolled in healthcare related pathways; and
- more than half of Opportunity Grant participants received a combination of Opportunity Grant awards and other forms of financial aid.

## **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

### **Creation of the Opportunity Grant Program**

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) will develop and implement the Opportunity Grant Program. Students enrolled in the program will be eligible to receive funding for tuition and fees at the public community and technical college rate, plus \$1,000 per academic year for books, tools, and supplies (both are prorated if the credit load is less than full time).

The program will be available to Washington residents enrolled in "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study" at community and technical colleges, private career schools and Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council-approved apprenticeship programs. It will be phased in as follows:

- Students who enroll prior to January 2010 must have a family income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Students who enroll between January 2010 and January 2012 must have a family income that is at or below the state median family income.
- After January 2012, all students in eligible programs will qualify.

A student must make satisfactory progress and maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average for continued eligibility. Funding is limited to 45 credits or the equivalent or three years, whichever comes first.

Colleges will receive an enhancement of \$1,500 per full-time equivalent student enrolled in the Opportunity Grant Program whose income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

These funds will be used for individualized support services necessary for student success. The SBCTC is accountable for student retention and program completion. They will set and monitor performance, and must reduce funding at institutions that do not meet targets.

The SBCTC and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) will work together to ensure that students participating in the Opportunity Grant Program receive all other state and federal financial aid to which they are entitled. They will also provide answers to transition to state and federal financial aid for students who complete the Opportunity Grant Program and pursue additional education.

### **Creation of Opportunity Partnerships**

The SBCTC, in partnership with business, labor, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB), will:

- identify high demand training programs offered by qualified postsecondary institutions that lead to a credential, certificate, or degree;
- gain recognition of the credentials, certificates, and degrees by Washington's employers and labor organizations, and designate them as "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study;" and
- market the credentials, certificates, and degrees to potential students, businesses, and apprenticeship programs.

Community and technical colleges and local workforce development councils will partner to develop the opportunity partnership program, which will provide mentoring to opportunity grant students. Participating students will be matched with a business or labor mentor employed in their field of study. The mentor will help the student explore careers and employment options through any combination of tours, informational interviews, job shadowing, and internships. The WTECB will receive funding on behalf of the opportunity partnerships. In partnership with business, labor, and the SBCTC, the WTECB will determine criteria and distribute funds for the program.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Clarifies that the same credit limit applies for students attending programs at institutions which are on a clock hour system as students attending institutions on a credit system.

Includes Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council-approved apprenticeship programs on the list of institutions that are qualified to participate in the Opportunity Grant Program.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 15, 2007.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for section 101, relating to the Opportunity Grant Program funding for students, which takes effect immediately.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) For the first time in U. S. history, people are less likely to be as well educated as the generation before them. The majority of students don't pursue baccalaureate degrees. This program is critical because it: reduces costs; presents a clear pathway; and meets the needs of local businesses and communities.

Approximately 30 colleges applied to participate in the Opportunity Grant Pilot Program and due to limited funding, only 10 grants were awarded. This program was designed to help students who typically struggle in postsecondary education to be successful. The pilot programs kept students engaged by providing them with intense personal interaction and support, in addition to financial assistance. Either because they were not at college level, or needed more support than typical financial aid could provide for them, this program provided what they needed to go to school and build their lives.

Aerospace and health care are facing dramatic staffing challenges. There are not enough people with the necessary skills to fill the job openings. The Association of Washington Business' members cite workforce issues as the biggest problem facing them in the global economy. Each Opportunity Grant Pilot Program has very strong industry support; industry match was a requirement for participation.

The Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council and the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) support the program and look forward to partnering with mentoring and in other areas. Flexibility to increase the funding for supplies for new apprentices above the \$1,000 limit would be beneficial, and they would like to see apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs referenced along with internships in the bill.

The additions of the mentor component and private career schools were appreciated and are seen as great ways to help more students. The HECB is committed to coordinating financial aid for Opportunity Grant students. They have a few technical suggestions, and a caveat on the data from the WTECB that is being used to describe the unmet financial need.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Chris Reykdal, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; William Bonaudi, Big Bend Community College; Brad Eishold; Michael Itti, League of Education Voters; Kim Justice, Statewide Poverty Action Network; Christel Salazar; Linda Lanham, Aerospace Futures Alliance of Washington; Troy Hutson, Washington State Hospital Association; Amber Carter, Association of Washington Business; Terry Tilton, Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council; Jeff Johnson, Washington State Labor Council; Don Bennett, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Tim Probst, Washington Workforce Association; Gena Wikstrom, Northwest Career Colleges Federation; and John Klacik, Higher Education Coordinating Board.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.